

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8496

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI KS

SUBJECT: TOP LEVEL PERSONNEL CHANGES INMND

1. BLUE HOUSE ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 17 SERIES OF TOP LEVEL CHANGES IN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND ROK ARMY INCLUDING PRINCIPALLY SHIFT OF CHOE KWANG-SU FROM VICE MINISTER MND TO SERVE AS SENIOR PRESIDENTIAL PROTOCOL SECRETARY. CHOE SUCCEEDS CHO SANG-HO WHO HAS BEEN NAMED AMBASSADOR TO ITALY. LT. GENERAL YI MIN-U, FORMER ARMY DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, HAS BEEN NAMED TO REPLACE CHOE AS MND VICE MINISTER.

2. IN SEPARATE MOVE BLUE HOUSE HAS BROUGHT LT. GENERAL PAK WON-KUN FROM COMMAND OF SECOND ROK ARMY IN TAEGU TO SERVE AS PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL ASSISTANT IN CHARGE OF NATIONAL SECURITY. THIS POST HAS BEEN VACANT SINCE PRESENT MINISTER MND SO CHONG-CHOL LEFT IT A YEAR AGO. PAK'S MOVE SET UP GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS AMONG SEVERAL OTHER LIEUTENANT GENERALS WHO TRADED TOP MND AND ARMY SLOTS, AND ALONG WITH CHOE'S MOVE MADE ROOM FOR PROMOTION TWO MAJOR GENERALS TO CORPS COMMANDER JOBS AND LIEUTENANT GENERAL RANK.

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3. LIKE MOST ALL OF PRESIDENT PARK'S TOP MILITARY

SHIFTS, THESE HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY CALCULATED TO BRING INTO KEY POSITIONS MEN WHO HAVE WELL ESTABLISHED RECORDS OF LOYALTY TO PARK REGIME AND ABILITY. CHOE KWANG-SU'S REPLACEMENT AS MND VICE MINISTER BY ARMY MAN HAS LONG BEEN SOUGHT BY ROKA ELEMENTS WHICH RESENTED FACT THAT EX-FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN ABOVE THEM, FIRST AS ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR LOGISTICS, THEN AS VICE MINISTER; CHOE HIMSELF WE UNDERSTAND IS UNHAPPY WITH MOVE WHICH HE CONSIDERS SOMETHING OF A COMEDOWN. LT. GENERALS PARK WON-KUN AND YI MIN-U ARE HIGHLY REGARDED PROFESSIONALLY AS WELL AS BEING CLOSE FRIENDS AND MILITARY ACADEMY CLASSMATES OF PARK. TWO NEW LIEUTENANT GENERALS, YANG PONG CHIK AND YI KUN YONG, FORMER ARMY G-2 AND COMPTROLLER RESPECTIVELY, HAVE SIMILAR EXCELLENT REPUTATIONS. SNEIDER

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